

REPORT

OF THE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF CANTON, MASS.,

APRIL 5th, 1847.

On motion of ELISHA WHITE, Esq., *Voted*, that six hundred copies of this Report be printed, and that each family be furnished with a copy.

LEONARD EVERETT, *Town Clerk*.

Your Committee are happy to be able to report hopeful progress in the general condition of the Schools, under their supervision, during the past year. Although not equal to their wishes, still the degree of improvement is encouraging: and we trust the progress already made is the earnest of greater and more rapid advancement. In the upward path of success and attainment the prospect enlarges and brightens. "Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise." From all the towns and cities of the Commonwealth, the voice of gratulation reaches us, proclaiming the prosperous and cheering results of our system of education, in the flourishing condition of our common schools, and the improving qualifications of their teachers. The volume of "Abstracts of Massachusetts School Returns" for 1845—6, prepared by the Secretary of the Board of Education, from the reports of the superintending Committees, contains the concentrated, and condensed observation and experience of the most intelligent and ardent friends of education, from all the different intellectual eminences and moral watch-towers of the State. This volume, selected with great labor, and ability, contains a vast collection of facts, opinions and suggestions richly deserving the attentive perusal of every parent and friend of the coming, and present generation. It is an honor to the Old Bay State, to have furnished a book, fraught with more varied experience, practical knowledge, and available wisdom on the subject of education, than any other hitherto issued from the press. It should be the *vade-me-cum* of every teacher in the Commonwealth. It bears ample testimony, that the cause of most vital importance, the education of the whole population, is making constant and steady advancement throughout the length and breadth of

the State :—that more enlightened and correct conceptions of the nature, design, and object of education, and the means and instrumentalities of its promotion and attainment are all abroad, working great and salutary changes in the minds of the community. It is now better seen and felt than formerly, that educated minds and hearts are the richest wealth,—that education includes the developement of the whole man,—physically, intellectually, and morally ; not only the acquisition of knowledge, but the disposition and ability to direct it to the attainment of excellence, virtue, and happiness.

Hence the urgent demand, the unanimous acclamation, from all quarters, for better qualified, more efficient, and more thoroughly accomplished teachers. It is the harmonious verdict of all the examining Committees, that the specified requisitions of the Statute, as to literary attainments, indispensable as they may be to the approbation of the candidate, are only tokens, and by no means prophets or pledges of other qualifications, essential and necessary to make a competent, practical, right good teacher. That a correct knowledge of Arithmetic, of English Grammar, and Geography, is only the preliminary element, the initiatory attribute for the sacred trust, and momentous responsibilities of that office. To the teachers of our common schools, are, in a solemn measure, under God, entrusted the fondest hopes of parents ;—the character of the coming generation ;—the well being of society ;—and the happiness of immortal minds. What a responsibility ! What a trust ! Can we unduly magnify his office ? Can we exaggerate the importance or the power of his influence, for weal or wo, who is appointed, public and private, tutor to “the young branches of our nobility” ;—the future representatives, senators, judges and presidents of our mighty empire ; aye, more than these,—the SOVEREIGN PEOPLE ;—who are to be *their* masters and magistrates, *their* lawgivers and rulers,—*their* priests and kings ? By him, these arbiters of the future destiny of our Republic ;—these umpires of the “life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness” of its future citizens, are to be imbued with the knowledge—the love of duty,—the sacredness of principle,—the probity, integrity and virtue ; which shall fit them for their high vocation.

Consider the station he occupies. He is the chosen model, the publicly approved pattern, for the imitation of the children committed to his care. He is selected, commissioned, and paid, for the express purpose of moulding them into whatever shape and form, he is pleased, or fited to give them, at that yielding age too, when the impressions received, are the deepest and most indellible. It is the first element of education—the earliest instinct of childhood to imitate superiors ; to emulate

those whom they are taught to respect and obey. It is the height of the ambition, especially of the ingenuous, the sprightly, the promising, and the aspiring to attain the nearest possible resemblance—in habits, manners and morals to this living, authoritative, oracular example, daily moving before them. What he is, teaches more than what he says. Not his words only, but the tones in which he utters them, the manner in which he pronounces them will be reverberated in distinct echoes from every form, in the school-room. This assimilating process is constantly going on, not by inculcation from books, but by a subtle, indefinable alchymy, transmuting the gestures and dispositions, the manners and the morals of the teacher, into the deportment and whole bearing of the children. Whether, he inculcates verbal lessons of refinement, civility and virtue, or not, his character, his example will infuse its color and complexion into theirs. His eye, his look, the tones of his voice, will express the feelings, dispositions and sentiments, that pervade his heart. In that light, Daguerreotype likenesses will be taken, bearing the exact moral lineaments of the original. Is the teacher dignified, courteous and kind, or is he rash, coarse, and vulgar in his manner, *fac similes* of these traits of his, will be multiplied by the daily group gathered around him. And his "image and superscription," are enstamped, not on a frail and perishable material; but on coin more durable than silver, and infinitely more precious than gold. "Every line that the teacher traces upon the mind of the scholar, is, as it were," "graven with the point of a diamond." "Rust will eat up the hardest metals; time and the elements will wear out the deepest chiselling in marble, and if the painter could dip his pencil in the rainbow, the colors would at length fade from the canvass. But the spirits, the minds of that group of children, in however humble circumstances, are immortal." No profession, no calling can surpass, in importance and responsibility, that of a teacher in our common schools. His influence terminates not with the children, and is not confined to six hours work in the school house. He must labor, if he cannot board, "from house to house;" and we are inclined to the opinion, that even that ancient practice of "boarding round," would be a vast improvement on the present custom, by which the teacher and the parents are suffered to remain utter strangers, without sympathy or co-operation. The teacher must become the missionary, to awaken, and enlist the interest of parents.—Here is a wide field for his benevolent exertions. It may be deemed a NEW one. We are aware that it has not been occupied much of late. It has been neglected, and passed by, as though it were unknown land, or even forbidden ground. But it must be reclaimed, or our enterprize

of educating the whole people, must fail. The emissaries of the Law, cannot reach it, by any constituted prescriptive right. The superintending Committees, cannot occupy it, for it requires constant possession, and they lay no claim to the attribute of ubiquity. The teacher has, *ex officio*, a pre-emption right, a vested title to the occupancy, and improvement of this unappropriated territory. He is engaged, for the express purpose of instructing all the children belonging to the District, in which he "keeps school." He has no delegated authority to compel the attendance of scholars upon his instructions. He is armed with no legal power to enforce the duty of parents to send their children regularly and punctually to school. His prerogative lies in personal influence, in moral suasion. "If the mountain will not come to Mahomet, then Mahomet must go to the mountain." If parents are too indifferent to the education of their children, to ensure regularity of attendance upon the means, publicly furnished for that object, which is the *deplorable evil*, in some of our Districts, then should the influence of the teacher come in, to awaken the interest of the parents and rescue the children from the untoward inheritance of ignorance and barbarism.

In this emergency, "to save a considerable portion of the rising generation from falling back into the condition of half-civilized or of savage life, what other instrumentality does society afford, than to send into every obscure and hidden district in the State, a teacher whose education is sound, whose language is well selected, whose pronunciation and tones of voice are correct and attractive, whose manners are gentle and refined, all whose topics of conversation are elevating and instructive, whose benignity of heart is constantly manifested in acts of civility, courtesy and kindness, and who spreads a nameless charm over whatever circle may be entered. Such a person should the teacher of every common school be." Such a teacher, by associating freely with every family, by familiar acquaintance with the mothers especially, gaining too the affection of the children, through the delightful medium of instruction, and securing the confidence and friendship of the parents, by his fidelity and devotedness to the progress, advancement and happiness of their offspring, would not have to complain of irregularity in the attendance of his scholars, nor suffer the mortification of finding his Register filled with "carets," and his seats empty on the day of examination. "Such a teacher, as far as it may be in the power of any mortal agency to do it, may mould the habits and manners of the rising generation into the pleasing forms of propriety and decorum, and, by laying their foundations in the principles of justice, magnanimity, affection and religion, may give them an ever-during permanence."

But it may be said, that this is elevating the standard of qualifications for teachers too high; that young men of such attainments cannot be obtained for the compensation which we can afford to give: that we must be content to employ second or third rate masters, because we pay only second or third rate wages. This we think is a mistaken view of the case. We can afford to pay what a teacher is worth. That which costs nothing is worth nothing. Cheap teachers are always the dearest. The money that is paid to stupid, indolent, awkward, incompetent School-master-Apprentices is worse than thrown away. Enormous sums have been wasted on this class of pretenders, whose influence on the delicate, susceptible minds of childhood, has been like frost upon the early flowers of Spring. What then shall we do? Shall we continue to employ these second and third rate masters? Or shall we turn our thoughts, and hopes, and hearts, to the highly respectable and increasing class of FIRST RATE female teachers? This seems to us, an alternative, forced upon the small country towns, by circumstances beyond their control. The populous towns and cities will give higher wages than we can, and furnish employment the year round. They will of course, secure the services of nearly all of those first rate masters, who make teaching their profession, leaving to us only those, who engage in the business for a few months in winter, as a more lucrative occupation than boot making, or in public estimation more honorable than manufacturing and farming, or as a temporary resort to get money to secure some ulterior object. Far be it from us to disparage this worthy class of ambitious and enterprising young men. Many of them make excellent teachers. But with them teaching is not the object of their pursuit; of course it does not engage their highest interest or warmest affection. Many of these are strangers from other States, bringing recommendations "which prove the good will of their signers, far more than their good sense or trust worthiness." The question returns, shall we continue to rely upon the doubtful qualifications, and temporary services of this hireling class of teachers to carry out the great educational processes of the community? We think the experiment has been tried long enough. Experience warns us against suffering our children longer to be cheated of their most precious birth right by ignorance and pretension. If there is a remedy at hand, against imposture and inaptitude, immorality and incompetency, it is time to apply it. That remedy we are of the opinion, is to be sought in a thoroughly-disciplined, well-trained, and competently-educated class of devoted—professional, energetic female teachers. We do not aver, that such a class has yet been found. It has not hitherto been fully

and loudly called for. The scales of popular confidence have not been heartily biased in favor of its ability to meet the exigency.

But the demand will create the supply. The appreciation will elicit the talent. Let it be distinctly known, and firmly accredited that females *can* be qualified—and when qualified, can find employment during the greater part of the year, in the profession of teaching, and they will soon be found in sufficient number, ready and competent, to the duty. The opinion is rapidly gaining public faith and favor that the female mind when rightly trained is as adequate and well adapted for teaching and managing children as that of the male. The habit of engaging for the summer schools females of immature age, of limited attainments, and inexperience, has operated to prejudice the minds of many intelligent persons against the expediency of employing female teachers for the winter schools. But let them understand that they are required to be well qualified, by suitable age, literary attainments, and varied experience,—that they must avail themselves of the facilities and opportunities for a preparation, afforded in our Normal schools and other seminaries, for the sacred trust of forming the minds and hearts of the rising generation to knowledge, virtue and religion, and then grant them the patronage they deserve, and they will stand forth worthy and well qualified to perform their part of the work of human progress and universal education. “The hand that rocks the cradle moves the world.” Women are our first teachers. They plant the first seeds of character in the fertile soil of the youthful breast. They stand as watchful sentinels to guard the sacred enclosures of domestic virtue and happiness against the first approach of immorality and infidelity, and they have yet a great mission to fulfil in moulding and shaping the character of the young, and securing the success and prosperity of every holy and humane institution in our country.

Having dwelt so long upon topics of vital importance, to the success of our system of public education, we shall confine ourselves to as narrow limits as possible, and do justice to the schools of the several Districts.

In District No. 1. The same teacher, Miss Almira Tucker of Canton, taught the Summer and Winter terms, to the general acceptance of the parents, and the approval of the Committee. There were no striking excellencies to recommend, and no notable faults to censure. This school is pursuing the monotonous tenor of its way. The number of scholars is much less than formerly, generally young, irregular in their attendance, and of course not forward in their studies. There are some

exceptions to this remark, a few hold a respectable rank for scholarship, constant attendance, and proficiency in geography, and drawing maps.

In District No. 2, there is more to note. The Summer term was kept by Miss H. M. Fisher, of Dedham,—in the old house, and she quite a young teacher—two qualities often incompatible to a good school. In justice to the teacher we would remark, that in literary qualifications, and a disposition to improve the minds and morals of the scholars, there appeared to be no deficiency. But owing to her youth and inexperience, she failed to secure the confidence and interest of the parents, or the respect and submission of the children. The school was very thinly attended at the closing examination,—a decisive proof of the want of sympathy, co-operation, and familiar intercourse between parents and teacher, indispensable to success.

We now come to a new era in District No. 2. Since the close of the Summer term,—a new, plain, neat, and commodious school house, has been completed; and on the 4th of December last, it was dedicated by appropriate religious services; when an able and impressive address was delivered by the Hon. John C. Park of Boston, eloquently and feelingly setting forth the high objects and sacred purposes to which it was erected and consecrated. It was a joyous occasion long to be remembered. The location of the house,—its elevated and beautiful scenery; its architecture; internal arrangements; ventilation; liberal extent of black board; Thermometer, clock, and convenient play grounds, all conspire to give it an attractive charm in the minds of the children, who are hereafter, to regard and love it as their school days home; and to make it a conspicuous monument to the judicious liberality and good taste of the parents, who have bequeathed it as valuable legacy to their posterity for generations to come.

Under these auspicious circumstances, of deep interest on the part of the parents, and thrilling excitement and enthusiasm in the children, Mr. Samuel Bradley Noyes, was employed for the winter term,—a teacher well known to you, by his reputation for tact and talent, in regard both to instruction and government.

It is praise enough for this school to say, that it has fully satisfied the high expectations cherished at its commencement. But there are some characteristics in this school which we would mention, as having given it a preeminence among our other schools,—characteristics too, neither miraculous, nor supernatural, and therefore neither unattainable nor inimitable by all our schools. On the part of the teacher and children there were promptness and punctuality; duly regarding the old maxim, universally indispensable to the best success of all schools, "On the

spot ; at the time ; wide awake." The teacher was zealous in his efforts, and indefatigable in his labors ; brisk in all his motions, and active in all his movements ; ingenious in methods of discipline, and expedients to secure attention and application, without much severity, and resort to physical force ; appealing rather to the spirit of emulation and self-respect in his pupils, than to the ignoble fear of punishment. The rod, though not banished, was reserved for the conclusion of the argument, " the ultima ratio regum ;" the last resort of authority. On the alert himself, he never suffered his scholars to drowse over their lessons, or recitations, as though they were in a mesmeric slumber, but inspired them with his own wakefulness ; clear in his perceptions, quick in his apprehensions, apt and full in his explanations, he aimed to make them *thinkers*, instead of mere *repeaters* from books, to give vitality to the dead letter, and make knowledge practical. His eminent skill in vocal music, enabled him to give that delightful exercise a degree of interest, and a correctness of execution rarely attained in common schools. And here we would say, that we regard the faculty to sing as one of the intellectual endowments of our Creator, as much as that of speaking and reading, or any other. And the gift of the talent implies the obligation to its cultivation. Ability is the proclamation to duty, but the *usefulness* of music, as a branch of Education is obvious, if the *duty* of its cultivation were doubtful. It quickens, enlivens, and brightens the whole mental and moral atmosphere of the school room. It gives a brisk current to the sluggish thoughts, awakens the slumbering energies of the mind and body, arouses the whole intellectual and moral sensibilities, gives cheerfulness, animation, and life to all the forces of the soul, and strengthens and cheers it to make more vigorous exertions in every field of noble pursuit or virtuous enterprize. We would say of music in the language of a christian Poet,

" 'Tis thine, Sweet Power ! to raise the thoughts sublime,
 Quell each rude passion, and the heart refine ;
 Soft are thy strains as Gabriel's gentlest string,
 Calm as the breathing zephyr of the spring."

The order, and discipline, the propriety and decorum, of this school, in going out, and coming in, at recess, and the rapidity and concert with which they performed their various gymnastic evolutions and manual exercises, prove that good manners, graceful deportment, easy attitudes, respectful behavior, and civil demeanor, may be successfully taught in our schools. These traits of character are as important to be attained as any branch of Education. Manners are often the true index

of the morals, and children should be strictly guarded against the contamination of vulgarity, impurity, and profaneness. We would distinctly remark, that attention to manners, morals, and music has not interfered with the proficiency of this school in the intellectual and literary branches, but has greatly aided it. In all these branches the instruction was thorough, and the classes all appeared well, and the scholars have all been regular and punctual in their attendance, and all the seats well filled to the last, even on the day of examination, when many scholars are disposed to take their examination into their own hands, and always raise a *bad report* of themselves. Here have been combined, during the term, the essential elements of a good school, what all our schools ought to be, and might be, viz:—a suitable, airy, school room, an efficient, energetic teacher, interested parents, right smart scholars, and a crowded house of sympathising relatives and friends at the examination.

In District No. 3, a new story has been added to the School House, and two commodious, well-arranged rooms furnished for its primary and grammar schools. The liberality of this district has been severely taxed, but nobly met, in the expenses incurred in providing these ample accommodations for the rising generation, and the inhabitants will have the satisfaction of well-intentioned generosity, and a rich reward in the consciousness of having performed a duty, and bequeathed a legacy to posterity, better than silver and gold.

The summer and winter terms of the primary school, were taught by Miss Maria Crane, of Canton, whose amiable disposition, gentle manners, and moral instructions, had a happy and salutary influence upon the conduct and general deportment of the children committed to her care. The order, discipline, and proficiency of the scholars, considering their ages, were gratifying to parents, and to the Committee. The gymnastic exercises and the introduction of vocal music, gave relief to the routine of severer studies, and imparted an air of cheerfulness and animation to the faces and hearts of the children. The closing examination, evinced a reciprocity of interest and affection between the teacher and her pupils, which is an unerring test of fidelity, love of children, and assiduity on her part to the duties of her station.

The summer term of the Grammar School, was kept by Miss A. M. Messinger, of Canton. At the commencement of this school, apprehensions were entertained, that there prevailed a listlessness, and apathy which would prove serious obstacles to its success; but the closing examination proved, that the constant, persevering, indefatigable labors of the teacher, had happily overcome them, and the rec-

itations, in all the classes, were prompt, correct, and satisfactory.

The winter school was taught by Miss M. S. Messinger, of Canton, the same female who taught the winter previous, with signal ability and success, after a male teacher had failed to secure the respect, and subordination of the scholars. Her efforts were crowned with equally gratifying results, the past term. Order, neatness and decorum were conspicuous characteristics of her management and discipline, and the proficiency of the scholars in all the branches prescribed, was encouraging, fully justifying the expediency and utility of employing well qualified female teachers for our winter schools. The Registers, of both of the schools, were kept, with accuracy, and peculiar neatness.

In District No. 4. The school has been kept nine months during the year, and we are sorry to say to very little apparent advantage for the time and money expended. The summer term was kept five months, by Miss Louisa C. Capen, of Stoughton. And the winter term by Mr. Daniel G. Otis, of Scituate, four months. The whole number of scholars attending was forty, and the average attendance between twenty and thirty. Here then, we at once perceive the cause of this lamentable failure. There is nothing like regularity or punctuality of attendance. The Register is completely defaced, with marks of tardiness and absence, not to say carelessness and inattention. There has been no sympathy or co-operation between the parents, the teacher or the children, and perhaps we ought to add, the superintending committee. The schools were visited by that Committee at their commencement, and by some misunderstanding as to the duty of notifying them, individually, but one of the Committee knew of the time of the close of the winter term. He was present then, and also visited the school between the commencement and the close. Where there has been a sad deficiency on all hands, it is vain to look for success. Here is need of a *missionary teacher*, with a warmth of zeal in the profession, a burning love for children, and an ardent desire for the elevation of society fervent enough to melt this ice of indifference, and thaw this frozen zone of neglect; a teacher who will go round from house to house, awaken the slumbering sensibilities of parents, and draw out the love, emulation, and ambition of the children, and then the seats of the school room will be occupied, the parents will visit it, and it will again be filled, at the examinations as in days of yore. A teacher, alone, who loves the children as well as the money to be received for their instruction, can effect "this consummation so devoutly to be wished."

In District No. 5, the summer term was kept by Miss Clara B. Tucker, of Canton, with so good a degree of success, and approbation,

that she has again been employed for the ensuing season. She having, during the winter, attended the Normal school at Bridgewater, fond expectations are cherished that she may be found qualified to be permanently retained in this school, summer and winter, and thereby avoid those great disadvantages and inconveniences arising from a constant change of teachers.

The winter school was taught by Mr. J. Mason Everett, of Canton, and at the several visits and examinations, the Committee were happy to witness the good order, and progress of the scholars. Physiology, History and Algebra, were taught to some of the scholars of advanced standing in this school. Here also are some very good readers and Arithmeticians, and Grammarians. The condition of this school was prosperous and gratifying to all concerned. But the school house, needs immediate attention, or no decent teacher will be found to enter it. An entire new arrangement inside, and a more attractive color on the outside, are needed to give it interest, convenience and respectability in the eyes of the inhabitants of Pleasant street, and reputation for good taste in the opinion of the community.

With regard to District No. 6, we are unable to report as favorably as we could wish. Miss Ellen A. Salisbury of Medfield, kept the Summer term. She was amiable in her manners, correct in her morals, and gentle in her disposition; but deficient in energy, decision and firmness. She failed to maintain that order, subordination, and regular attendance indispensable to a good school. The Winter school was taught by Mr. Isaac A. Parsons of Maine, and to very little if any better success. There was a want of dignity in manner, of correctness of language which should characterize a teacher of youth. We are aware of allowances to be made on account of the heterogeneous materials of which this school is composed. But children cannot be expected to have good manners and refinement unless they witness them in the example and copy they are taught to imitate at school. Some of the scholars appeared well at the examination, and deserve commendation. But the absence of many, and the insubordination of those present, the want of order and decorum, proved that very little respect, or attachment was felt for the teacher. The Register too was badly kept, exhibiting a culpable deficiency of neatness and accuracy, in a person duly qualified for keeping school.

"The Legislature have enacted a stringent, but needful law, respecting the school Registers; by which law every teacher, who fails to fill up and complete his School Register and deposit it with the general Committee, or with such person as they may designate to receive it,

shall not be entitled to receive pay for his services. Probably only those, who have been obliged to collect the School Registers of all the teachers in any town can fully appreciate the necessity of adopting so strong a measure. This money motive will doubtless quicken the memories of some teachers, and render them more careful and punctual in this branch of their duty. Due respect for this law will require that no compensation be paid to teachers hereafter, till they shall first have completed their registers and passed them over to the general Committee." Abs. Ms. School Reports, page 216, 1845-6.

In District No. 7, Miss Harriet Reynolds, is keeping her twelfth year, summer and winter. It would be superfluous to say that here was confidence, sympathy and co-operation between the parents, teacher, and children. Harmony has ever characterised this district. And were it not for the change of scholars, here would be an approximation to the perfection of our system of education. One competent, active, efficient, up-with-the-times teacher, with the same scholars for ten or twelve years, and the full confidence and support of parental influence, must secure a good result. But imperfection belongs to humanity. In this district there is a constant change of inhabitants, so that the school puts on a new aspect at every annual visitation. We will here close this protracted Report, by recommending for all the school houses except the new one, larger extent of black boards, so that a whole class may be exercised upon them at the same time; and also solicit from our affluent citizens the donations of Maps on rollers, Globes and other furniture, so common in the schools of our cities and populous towns.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

BENJAMIN HUNTOON,
Wm. B. HAMMOND,
TIMOTHY C. TINGLEY.